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Front Page Edit Page Other Page

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Too Much Loose Talk

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Reports from Washington are to the effect that security officials in the Eisenhower administration are beginning to lean toward the belief that the government is handing out entirely too much information, and much of it is directly benefiting the Soviet Union.

It is true that the American people are the most prolific talkers in the world and that their penchant for being "on the inside" of everything makes of them deplorably poor keepers of secrets.

But whether the government is justified in crawling into a shell and withholding information which rightfully belongs to the people of a democracy is another thing.

Experience gained from the outset of World War II in Europe 16 years ago cannot be easily forgotten. It was the policy of the Roosevelt administration to classify most everything as "top drawer" secret, to conduct normal government activities behind a cloak of "hush-hush" and to tell the people as little as possible.

The President and his aides held secret meetings with friendly powers, they entered into secret agreements, they moved in an aura of secrecy never before known in this country —yet in the end it was found out that nothing was really kept secret from those who should not know. The American people were poorly informed on all major issues, but foreign powers had no difficulty in learning every move this country made.

The Soviet Union knew what was going on in the State Department in the Army and Navy and had concrete figures on defense output as against only conjecture on the part of the American people. Russians knew before Americans that there was an atom bomb and probably were helped in stealing complete information by being able to operate under the strict cloak of secrecy thrown about this nation.

Maybe all of this still would have happened had the American people been better informed, but that is not the question. The main thing is that it did happen at a time when there was supposed to be tight secrecy.

With the Eisenhower administration in command, there came about a relaxation in the thinking that all government operations must be "top drawer" secret. More information began to reach the people about the ordinary functions of Washington. And whether any harm has been done is rightfully questionable. But now come expressions from some sources that too much information is being released.

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It is said that Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson and Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, are concerned and have stated their case to President Eisenhower. Donald A. Quarles, assistant secretary of defense, spoke for the department as follows:

In keeping our people informed, I believe we overdo it. Spying and defection have been very serious and we should and are taking every reasonable measure to prevent them. I believe that our open, unintentional assistance in technical fields has been just as important as the covert information they have received.

In an interview with the United States News & World Report, Dulles expressed a similar view when he said:

Sometimes I think we go too far in what our government gives out officially and in what is published in the scientific and technical field. We tell Russia too much. Under our system it is hard to control.

Neither has a desire to reinstitute a form of censorship and that is encouraging. There is no need for a general information blackout when a brownout on certain technical information would suffice. Every loyal American wants the security of his country protected, none wants the restrictive measures to reach beyond absolute necessity.

It seems as though every person completing a government assignment, either military or civilian, regards himself as an author or orator and possibly both. If he can't qualify for a book or a television show, he strives for a favorable position in one of the weekly magazines. And the competition has become so keen that he must tell all or else he finds himself without a salable piece of merchandise.

Why not control this sort of thing instead of considering a step backward into the information dark days that came in being with World War II? The quickest remedy would be to go to the source of the evil and not penalize all the people.